

## 27. The True Taste of Revenge

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Have you ever felt the urge to take revenge? It seems so sweet and satisfying.

Your boss takes full credit for the project you slaved over. Your professor unfairly gives you a failing grade. Your business partner sets you up to bear the brunt of his shady dealings. Your so-called friend betrays a confidence and spreads lies about you. Your spouse runs off with someone else, leaving you with no income and no place to live.

And now your appetite for revenge is whetted. In your mind's eye, you imagine your persecutors suffering as you have suffered, languishing in the same pit of misery that they've shoved you into. You fantasize that they call to you for help. But why should you care? With a shrug, you turn away, casually denying them the hand that they denied you. You know what they say, "I don't get mad, I get even."

Ah, to savor the sweet juices of revenges! Is that what it is? Is revenge truly sweet? Let's find a few facts about revenge:

### 1) What We Call It

Because revenge is such an unpleasant word, we frequently dress it up with a couple of more acceptable terms. First, instead of sayings "I'm going to get you!" we say, "I'm just standing up for my rights." This thinking naturally leads to a second label for revenge, "justified retaliation." In our minds, settling the score becomes a moral obligation. We feel justified in taking the law into our own hands and dealing out our own justice.

### 2) How God Feel about It

Whatever we call it, God calls it revenge. And it belongs to Him.

*Romans 12:17-19 Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord.*

### 3) The Revenge Process

Revenge may be sweet, but it sours the soul. It starts with an injury. Someone attacks us or steals something precious to us. Silently, we churn with anger and look for a vulnerability, a hole in our offenders' armor through which we can thrust our imaginary knife.

God's prohibition against revenge does not mean that we shouldn't defend ourselves as individuals or as a nation. Nor does it restrict us from seeking justice through the legal system. The issue has to do with personal vendettas and taking the law into our own hands.

In 1 Samuel 24, David has the perfect opportunity to avenge himself against Saul. The temptation to get even was strong, especially in light of Saul's record of mistreatment in chapters 22 and 23.

### A. WHAT AN OPPORTUNITY TO GET EVEN

*1 Sam 24:1-2 Now it happened, when Saul had returned from following the Philistines, that it was told him, saying, "Take note! David is in the Wilderness*

*of En Gedi.” Then Saul took three thousand chosen men from all Israel, and went to seek David and his men on the Rocks of the Wild Goats.*

Three thousand chosen crack commandos from all over Israel? It’s clear that Saul means business.

*1 Sam 24:3 So he came to the sheepfolds by the road, where there was a cave; and Saul went in to attend to his needs. (David and his men were staying in the recesses of the cave.)*

The sheepfolds indicates that this was a large cave, large enough to shelter a flock of sheep, so all or most of David’s 600 men could be hidden in the recesses of the cave.

The Bible is a real book, dealing with real people, living real lives, we aren’t surprised to see it describing Saul’s attention to his personal needs.

In NIV, NASB, LB, they all translate as, *“He came to the sheep pens along the way; a cave was there, and Saul went in to relieve himself. David and his men were far back in the cave.”* Saul went into the cave to go poopoo. KJV translates, *“Saul went in to cover his feet.”* How polite the King Jimmy is!

David caught Saul his pants down, literally. For the first time since he has attacked David, Saul is vulnerable.

This was no coincidence, but arranged by God to test David, to train David, and display the godly heart of David. Remember, temptation without opportunity is a bee without a sting.

*1 Sam 24:4 Then the men of David said to him, “This is the day of which the Lord said to you, ‘Behold, I will deliver your enemy into your hand, that you may do to him as it seems good to you.’ ” And David arose and secretly cut off a corner of Saul’s robe.*

We can imagine David, after listening to this counsel from his men, and with his sword, creeping quickly towards Saul, covered by the darkness of the cave. Saul was preoccupied and couldn’t hear David because of the three thousand soldiers and horses outside of the cave. David’s men are excited. Their lives as fugitives are about to be over, and they will soon be installed as friends and associates of the new king of Israel.

But as David came close to Saul, he didn’t bring it crashing down on Saul’s neck or thrust it through his back. Instead, he secretly cut off a corner of Saul’s robe.

*1 Sam 24:5-7 Now it happened afterward that David’s heart troubled him because he had cut Saul’s robe. And he said to his men, “The Lord forbid that I should do this thing to my master, the Lord’s anointed, to stretch out my hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the Lord.” So David restrained his servants with these words, and did not allow them to rise against Saul. And Saul got up from the cave and went on his way.*

What a tender conscience in David! Many would only be troubled that they did not take the opportunity to kill Saul. David only cut off the corner of Saul’s robe, yet his heart troubled him. Why? Because the robe was a symbol of Saul’s royal authority.

David not only kept himself from taking vengeance upon Saul, he restrained his servants also. They were willing to make Saul as a pin cushion with their swords. If David allowed them to do so, it would have been nothing more than a manipulation.

David knew it was disobedient of him to kill Saul, because God put Saul in a position of authority, and it was God's job to take care of Saul, not David's. David wanted the promise to be fulfilled, but he refused to try and fulfill God's promise through his own disobedience.

When we have a promise from God, somehow we think we are justified in sinning to pursue that promise. Sin is sin. This is always wrong.

## **B. THE TIME TO FACE THE TRUTH**

*1 Sam 24:8 David also arose afterward, went out of the cave, and called out to Saul, saying, "My lord the king!" And when Saul looked behind him, David stooped with his face to the earth, and bowed down.*

When David stooped with his face to the earth and bowed down, he showed great trust in God. Because he made himself completely vulnerable to Saul. Saul could have killed him very easily at that moment, but David trusted that if he did what was right before God, God would protect him and fulfill the promise.

*1 Sam 24:9 And David said to Saul: "Why do you listen to the words of men who say, 'Indeed David seeks your harm'?"*

David knew very well that Saul's fear of David came from Saul himself, and not from anyone else. But David puts the blame on nameless others, so that it is easier for Saul to say, "They were wrong" instead of "I was wrong." Even in confronting Saul, David is covering Saul's sin!

*1 Peter 4:8 And above all things have fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins."*

*1 Sam 24:10 Look, this day your eyes have seen that the Lord delivered you today into my hand in the cave, and someone urged me to kill you. But my eye spared you, and I said, 'I will not stretch out my hand against my lord, for he is the Lord's anointed.'*

This principle of "not-striking-out-against-God's-anointed-leaders" is good and important, but sometimes has been misused.

The phrase "touch-not-the-Lord's-anointed" is in vogue among some Christians and leaders. And often, to them, it means this: "You should never speak against a pastor or a leader. He is above your criticism or rebuke." Sometimes it is used even to prevent a biblical evaluation of a man's teaching.

David recognized that Saul was the Lord's anointed and refused to harm him, what David would not do is kill Saul. But he did humbly confront Saul with his sin, and hope to God that Saul would change his heart. But it is entirely wrong for people to use the idea of "touch-not-the-Lord's-anointed" to insulate a leader from all evaluation or accountability.

*1 Sam 24:11 Moreover, my father, see! Yes, see the corner of your robe in my hand! For in that I cut off the corner of your robe, and did not kill you, know and see that there is neither evil nor rebellion in my hand, and I have not sinned against you. Yet you hunt my life to take it.*

In 1 Samuel 15:27-28, the prophet Samuel rebuked Saul for his hard-hearted disobedience to God. In his distress, Saul tried to stop Samuel from leaving, and grabbed his robe, and a portion of the prophet's robe tore away. While Saul was holding the torn piece of Samuel's robe, Samuel said to him: *"The Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today, and has given it to a neighbor of yours, who is better than you."* Now, when David confronts Saul with the torn robe, Saul must be reminded of this incident, and God's message to him was loud and clear.

*1 Sam 24:12-15 Let the Lord judge between you and me, and let the Lord avenge me on you. But my hand shall not be against you. As the proverb of the ancients says, 'Wickedness proceeds from the wicked.' But my hand shall not be against you. After whom has the king of Israel come out? Whom do you pursue? A dead dog? A flea? Therefore let the Lord be judge, and judge between you and me, and see and plead my case, and deliver me out of your hand."*

David represents himself as a dead dog or a flea in contrast with the king of Israel. Finally, David tells Saul he will let God judge between them. More than revenge, David desires the Lord's will to be done.

### **C. SAUL'S REMORSE**

*1 Sam 24:16-21 So it was, when David had finished speaking these words to Saul, that Saul said, "Is this your voice, my son David?" And Saul lifted up his voice and wept. Then he said to David: "You are more righteous than I; for you have rewarded me with good, whereas I have rewarded you with evil. And you have shown this day how you have dealt well with me; for when the Lord delivered me into your hand, you did not kill me. For if a man finds his enemy, will he let him get away safely? Therefore may the Lord reward you with good for what you have done to me this day. And now I know indeed that you shall surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in your hand. Therefore swear now to me by the Lord that you will not cut off my descendants after me, and that you will not destroy my name from my father's house."*

David's honest words of confrontation soften the tough-hearted Saul.

*Proverbs 16:7 When a man's ways please the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.*

*1 Sam 24:22 So David swore to Saul. And Saul went home, but David and his men went up to the stronghold.*

What a miserable picture Saul is in! Saul remorseful about what he did to David, but he didn't repent. In other words, he is still in mess.

### **D. APPLICATIONS**

**1) If you're plotting revenge, however small and insignificant you may think it to be, surrender it now.**

Release your grip on your get-even scheme, and place the control in God's hands. We just learned that revenge is not so sweet after all. As a matter of fact, it is bitter and sour if we try it in our own strength.

**2) Just because a door was opened that seems make sense to us, it doesn't mean God wants us to walk in.**

How do we know if that is what God wants us? When we have this kind of "Open-Door" situations, see if it is truly from God by putting it against the Word of God. If

the opportunity goes against the Word of God, it is not from Him, because He never goes against His Word. That is the best way to recognize His way. Another way is that examine if that "Open-Door" is something we have to manufacture forcefully. If it was done in human way, we can take glory and it is not from Him. Because God will not share glory with anyone.

**3) When we realize that we were wrong in the sight of the Lord, it is absolutely important that we must do the right thing with God.**

Let's not be like Saul who knew that he was in wrong, yet still tried to hold onto his throne. If he repented and gave up his throne to David, I am sure that God would forgive him and gave him a peaceful life until his death.